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Lucia A Keegan 09/08/2006 04:25:10 PM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - President Bush on Secret Prisons
Iran Lebanon
PARIS - Thursday, September 07, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

President Bush on Secret Prisons
Iran
Lebanon

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Popular Le Parisien begins its 9/11 commemoration series with today's headline reading: "The Tragedy That Changed the World." Inside, Ambassador Stapleton's interview carries the title: "The Terrorists Have Not Given Up," a quote taken from the interview. This morning on FR2 the media review, which included the special issue by Le Parisien, prominently showed the interview page and the photo of Ambassador Stapleton.

President Bush's announcements on "secret prisons" which the media

is calling a "tacit acknowledgement they exist," (See Part C), Moscow's possible changing stance on Iran, (See Part C), the latest controversy over Syria's alleged involvement in a bombing attack in Lebanon, and the pressure on Tony Blair to step down from the Labor Party dominated international news, while the debate over the privatization of GDF and its merger with Suez is one of today's lead front-page stories. Le Monde headlines "The UMP Alone Against the World" while Les Echos titles: "GDF: The National Assembly to the Trenches." Liberation writes about the "Battle for Energy" echoed on the front page of La Croix: "The Energy Battle Is Only Just Starting."

All media outlets reported that Israel announced it would lift its air and sea blockade of Lebanon on Thursday, because international forces were ready to move into place to impose an arms embargo on the Hezbollah militia. TF1 noted that four French ships "were patrolling near the coast," maintaining the embargo until the arrival of the UNIFIL ships in the next few days. Radio Europe 1 focused on new hope for the Lebanese economy: "The end of the blockade should give a boost to the economy," reported the journalist.

Le Figaro reports that "Brussels is studying a 'plan B' to avoid a break with Ankara on the negotiations in view of Turkey's EU membership this fall..." Alexandrine Bouhliet explains that "one of Brussels' more severe punishments would be to suspend the talks until Ankara made a gesture towards Cyprus." But one of the options on which Ankara is counting is the "freezing" of certain topics in the negotiations, while overall negotiations continue.

Le Parisien interviews FM Douste-Blazy on France's visa procedures and new biometric visas "which will help to curb fraud and illegal immigration."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

President Bush on Secret Prisons

"Washington Empties CIA Secret Prisons"

Phillipe Gelie in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/07): "The alleged mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks has been transferred to Guantanamo. This is the first time Washington has acknowledged the existence of a network of secret prisons abroad. The U.S. President's tone was sharp and defensive as he defended the CIA's secret program and the usefulness of 'renditions.' President Bush

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emphasized that 'big fish' had been caught and that thanks to firm, necessary, legal and safe CIA interrogations, attacks had been foiled and accomplices arrested... But while the President is emptying these prisons, he also said the CIA's 'secret program remains crucial.'"

Iran

"Russia Changing Its Stance on Iran"

Fabrice Node-Langlois in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/07): "Moscow may be ready to consider the issue of economic sanctions on Tehran... Is this a diplomatic shift which could lead Tehran to change its attitude? Or is this pure diplomatic rhetoric? There have been several suggestions going in this direction, one from the Russian FM Lavrov and one from Putin's Sherpa, Igor Chuvalov. One expert believes that 'contrary to what the West thinks, Putin is not Iran's advocate...' The economic interests that link Moscow and Tehran notwithstanding, Russia did not want a conflict that will destabilize Iran. And so it could be that Tehran's obstinacy might in the end be detrimental to Moscow's interest... It is interesting to note that Serguey Lavrov made his remarks from South Africa, a country which is also a nuclear customer of Russia and which recently irritated the U.S. by re-affirming Iran's right to develop its commercial nuclear program. All the players dealing with Iran will have an opportunity to clarify their positions today in Berlin where the P5+1 are meeting."

"Iran's Dangerous Paradoxes"

Alexandre Adler in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/07): "The decision to send Khatami to Washington indicates Tehran's willingness to negotiate with Washington and Europe... The fact that Nasrallah, who finds his inspiration in Tehran, saw fit to ask the Lebanese people

to forgive Hezbollah for kidnapping the Israeli soldiers is another sign that the wind blowing from Iran has shifted. The time seems to have come for Tehran to proclaim its victory and engage on the path of a compromise. But will the West understand these complex signals early enough to avoid an unnecessary clash?"

Lebanon

"Peace for Lebanon Must Be Reinvented Urgently"

Former socialist Defense Minister and President of the Foreign Relations Commission, Paul Quiles, in left-of-center Liberation (09/07): "In Lebanon, like in Bosnia, Kosovo, and even Rwanda and Darfur today, the major powers are mired in their horse-trading and have failed to take the measure of the seriousness and gravity of the situation... It is undeniable that France contributed to kindling hope when it announced its availability to participate in an international force, while the U.S. was hampered by the war in Iraq and its lack of credibility in the Arab world... But why did France, perhaps out of vanity, speak exclusively with the U.S. instead of including Europe? Why has Europe not spoken up with one voice and ... more generally why do we shy away from building a European army? ... The time lost in diplomacy was essentially due to America's desire to give Israel some additional time... Beyond Lebanon, the crisis proves the hesitancy of major powers when it comes to dealing with the Middle East. It has become clear that the 'worship of force' in America as well as Israel is not the answer. While we must act against terrorism, force must be the last resort... The Iranian crisis could well once again emphasize the inconsistency of our major powers... The diversity and interdependency of the crises in the Middle East must dictate a global strategy accompanied by political reform rather than isolated actions guided by ideology and talk of terrorism and Islamism... While this might have been President Bush's initial intent with the GMEI, Iraq has proven the absurdity of this initiative." STAPLETON